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Culture and leisure

Last updated: 22/6-2023

About Sweden – an orientation about Swedish society.

Print

This text is about culture and leisure. We all need culture and leisure for our well-being. There are many opportunities for culture and leisure in Sweden.

Photo: Amelie Wintzell

The text describes such things as leisure activities, how you borrow books from a library and how to practice your Swedish together with others.

The right to culture and to active leisure

Everyone is entitled to enjoy art, music, theatre, dance, film, literature and science. You are also entitled to cultural pursuits of your own and to making art. Women and men have the same rights to decide for themselves what parts of cultural life they want to take part in.

Children are entitled to active leisure and recreation, with play and leisure activities appropriate for their age. Children are also entitled to enjoy culture, to cultural pursuits of their own and to make art.

People with functional impairments have to be able to partake in cultural life and pursue cultural activities of their own on the same conditions as everyone else. Sweden is a signatory of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Leisure, culture and civil society

Leisure time is the time when you are off work, not in school and not doing household work.. You yourself choose what you want to do in your leisure time.

Common leisure interests include sport, dance and theatre, playing music, playing video and computer games, and reading books. Many associations and municipalities arrange different types of leisure activities you can participate in. Examples of associations include sports clubs, cultural and educational associations, and faith communities.

Participating in the activities organised by the municipality or various associations gives you the opportunity to get to know new people and to practise your Swedish.

There is a large variety of associations and activities to choose from.

Municipalities and associations sometimes arrange activities for recent arrivals, refugees and immigrants in order to make it easier for them to get into Swedish society. Contact your municipality or search on its website to see what is available in your municipality.

Questions to think about

What leisure activities are available in your municipality?

What are the most common leisure interests in the country or countries where you lived previously?

There are many different forms of culture, but all forms of culture should contribute to the development of the individual. What this means is that culture makes people develop. Sweden, like many other countries, has a lot of culture to offer in the form of nature, history and food, for example.

The places where you enjoy culture have to be accessible to all. This means, for example, that it has to be possible to use a wheelchair and that text on signs must be adapted to people with impaired vision.

Examples of leisure activities and cultural life:

Nature and outdoor recreation

Spending time outdoors in nature is a common leisure activity in Sweden. There are several national parks you can visit. There are also many hiking trails, often with huts or windbreaks alongside for you to spend the night in.

In Sweden, everyone is allowed to enjoy nature, regardless of who owns the land. This is known as the Right of Public Access (Allemansrätten).

Under Allemansrätten, you are allowed to pick berries, mushrooms, and flowers in nature, but not in someone's garden. Some plants are protected – you are never allowed to pick those. There may also be special rules about what you are allowed to pick in national parks and nature reserves.

Chanterelles, ceps (porcini), and funnel chanterelles are all edible mushrooms you can pick in the woods. Never pick a mushroom that you do not recognise; there are also poisonous mushrooms, such as the fly agaric. The woods are also full of edible berries. Lingonberries, bilberries, cloudberries, and raspberries are all good to eat, but there are poisonous berries as well. Never pick berries you do not recognise.

Svenskt Friluftsliv has produced videos about the right of public access. These videos are in Swedish, with subtitles in Swedish, Arabic, English, Persian or Ukrainian.

[Watch videos about the Right of Public Access from Svenskt Friluftsliv.](#)

[Read more about the Right of Public Access on the page "Humans and the Environment" on Informationsverige.se.](#)

[Read more about poisonous mushrooms in a brochure from Giftinformationscentralen.](#)

Libraries

All Swedish municipalities have libraries for their inhabitants.

In libraries, you can borrow books, read magazines and newspapers, listen to music, and use computers. They have books and newspapers in many different languages. Some libraries also provide language training and homework help.

Books, newspapers and magazines, and CDs are free to borrow. In order to borrow them, you need to have a library card (lånekort), which you can get at the library as well.

Usually the lending time is three weeks. When you borrow a book or something else, you get a receipt which says when you have to return it. If you don't return the borrowed item on time, you have to pay an overdue charge.

Most libraries also provide access to computers and the internet. If you want to print out or copy a document, you have to pay.

Many libraries also arrange language cafés, where you can meet other people and practice different languages.

Sport

If you are interested in keeping fit or doing training there are many possibilities. You can use public parks, swimming pools or ice rinks, for example. There are also sports centres where you can play tennis or do other activities.

If you want to train at a training centre or gym you have to pay a fee. This is often paid on a monthly basis. You can also buy a single-use card if you want to try out an activity. Most gyms offer both individual training (such as weight training) and group training activities such as aerobics, dance or yoga.

Art

Museums and galleries exhibit art in various forms, including painting, sculpture and graphic design. Sometimes you have to pay an entrance fee, but other times there is no fee.

Music

Sweden has a rich musical life with concerts, choral singing and opera, for example. Some bars have live music performances on some nights. You can also sign and play music in the streets, though there are special regulations for playing music in a public space. These regulations may vary between municipalities.

Religion

There are many churches and other religious sanctuaries all over the country, which are open. In a church you can light candles and find time for peace and reflection. Some cities also have mosques and synagogues.

Historia

You can learn about the history of Sweden in many museums around the country. Several of these museums charge an entrance fee.

There are also ancient remains, which are traces of people from the distant past.

Practise Swedish with others

■ One good way to learn Swedish is to practise with people who can already speak it.

Remember to be careful if you are going to meet someone you have been in contact with on the internet. It is a good idea to tell someone where you are going and to arrange to meet the person in a public place.

Refugee guide or language buddy

Many municipalities and voluntary organisations are involved in helping newly arrived refugees and immigrants come into contact with Swedes. The names of these activities vary: språkvän (language friend), flyktingguide (refugee guide), fadder (sponsor, coach), mentor or kompis (buddy).

Your refugee guide or language buddy can help you learn Swedish more quickly and make new contacts that can make your daily life easier. Contact your municipality and register your interest in finding a language buddy or refugee guide.

Questions to think about

What outdoor activities are there in your area?

What places would you recommend people to visit?

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Informationsverige.se is a website run by the County Administrative Boards that contains information about Sweden for asylum seekers and people who have recently been granted a residence permit.

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